

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Designing for Dementia Residents in Assisted Living Facilities: The Impact of High Contrast Flooring

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As life expectancies increase our populations grow alongside it, meaning the demographics of the population are starting to have a higher percentage of elderly individuals who are more susceptible to life altering dementia related issues. There are currently more than 24 million people worldwide with some form of dementia and the number is expected to double every 20 years (Laakkonen, 2009). Individuals diagnosed with dementia face a terminal and debilitating condition for the remainder of their lives, often going years without an official diagnosis and even then, living with little to no knowledge on how to best cope with the side effects. Diagnosed individuals need professional care and support in order to ensure maximum quality of life and eliminate as much suffering and disability as possible. Given the growing population's collective age shift as well as the increased likelihood of developing dementia in later stages of life, it is necessary to develop a stronger understanding of how to best support and improve the lives of this particular group. A major factor in improving quality of life is to examine the interior environments in which these individuals

are spending the majority of their remaining time.

This research study aims to develop a better understanding of how environmental design factors play a role in the quality of life that dementia patients have in assisted living facilities, specifically targeting how high contrast flooring affects independent movement of residents. Data was collected with two methods, through healthcare staff surveys and through site observations. The findings of this study demonstrate that there is a perceived correlation between flooring materiality and a dementia resident's comfort in independently navigating spaces. These findings led the researcher to recommend a preliminary foundation of design for assisted living facilities through a design guide as a creative project.

Keywords: dementia, assisted living, environmental behavior, flooring, visuo-perceptual difficulty, contrast